



A BEEFSTEAK DINNER AT "THE MORGUE."

THESE BEEFSTEAK DINNERS.

WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW THEY ARE MANAGED.

NOT NECESSARILY TAMMANY AFFAIRS—WONDERFUL WAYS OF COOKING AND PRIMITIVE WAYS OF SERVING.

Public attention has been drawn of late in a new degree to an institution of the city which is not itself new. The reports that have been published since election of the performances of certain of the men who were then chosen to control the ensuing destinies of the expanded city have caused wonder to all and curiosity to some. The performances referred to are those which have taken place at various "beefsteak dinners," where the Mayor-elect, the Register-elect and others are credited with performances which are as full of promise for the stockyards of Chicago as for the City Hall of New-York. Even Tammany men, who are simple souls when it comes to questions of believing things to the glory of their own leaders, have shaken their heads a little over the official assertions that a man could eat and had eaten seven and a quarter pounds of beefsteak at a meal. Other persons have become so far interested as to hint that they should like to know what a beefsteak dinner is, anyway. It may be, too, that some have been led into the error of supposing that the beefsteak dinner is distinctly a Tammany institution. It shall be the effort of these few simple lines to resolve doubts and to remove misapprehensions.

As to the quantities of beefsteak eaten, it may be said at once that among the anti-Tammany elements of the city the stories are disbelieved. It may be that the pounds mentioned in them have something of the same relation to pounds avoirdupois that pounds sterling have to pounds troy. But the probability is that the boys lied. But Tammany is an unpleasant subject, and there is no reason why it should monopolize attention when the next local election is four years off. The beefsteak dinner itself is a pleasanter one. And it is not an exclusively Tammany affair at all. There was a Republican one only a few nights ago. And it is not even exclusively or necessarily political. There have been many excellent and enjoyable beefsteak dinners where public weal and misrule were not mentioned or thought of at all.

The favorite place for beefsteak dinners in New-York is the Morgue, in West Fifty-eighth-st. It is a big room, rather plain and bare, with its sides made largely of glass, adjoining a liquor shop. It has been for years the meeting-place of the Beefsteak Club, an organization that seems to have no limit of membership, no

regulation, no purpose and no law, beyond a tendency to come to a focus at intervals and eat beefsteak. The focus is the Morgue, with its sheetiron stove at one end and its row of soap boxes around three sides. The Beefsteak Club includes men of many callings, but a theatrical element predominates in it. Jesse Williams, the well-known musical director, and Max Freeman, the equally well-known stage manager, are among the most potent of its moving spirits.

There are no recognized permanent officers, but Max Freeman is often put in the chair—that is to say, on the middle soap box of the crescent—and there he tries to keep the others in some sort of order. But the discipline is rather more lax than it usually is when Mr. Freeman is conducting a comic opera rehearsal. Nobody cares much for rigid discipline but some want a degree of tranquillity that will allow them to eat steak, and it has been found that this end is better served by letting Max Freeman try to keep the rest in order than by compelling the rest to try to keep Max Freeman in order.

It is believed by many that a beefsteak dinner would be irretrievably ruined by the introduction of such conveniences as tables, chairs, knives and forks. It is not known whether it would or not, because it has never been tried, at least at the Morgue. What its imitators may do or try to do, the Morgue cares not. So there is no table at the Morgue, and there are no chairs. Around three sides of the room is a row of soap boxes, to which reference has been made before. Each guest has a box to sit on. This is regarded as a considerable concession. It would be more informal to stand up. Each two guests have another soap box between them. This is to put things on. The most important thing that is put on it is a mug of ale. Another thing that is important is a good-sized towel. Some enthusiasts maintain, with a show of logic, that when you are going to eat beefsteak with your fingers a napkin or anything to represent it is out of harmony. But this opinion is not general, and a useful compromise is made on the towel.

Thus the preliminaries of the service are arranged. The cooking is the next important question. Perhaps it should have been the first. When you are going to have a beefsteak dinner you must first get your beef. It must be carefully selected, for it is no true beefsteak dinner unless the result is at least four times as good as anything that can be had at any hotel or restaurant in New-York. The beef being selected by somebody who knows how to do it, it must be hung for a sufficient time to insure perfect tenderness. For cooking it must be cut in slices about two inches thick, certainly not less.

It is not of much use to try to have a beefsteak dinner unless your stove was made for the purpose. It should be of sheetiron, and large

enough to take in a large broiler through its front door. The fire must be made of hickory wood. This is as important as any other part of the process. The fire is allowed to burn itself down to a bed of glowing coals. In the mean time the broiler is made ready with its first load. As many of the steaks as it will hold are laid upon it and a mixture of salt and sugar is sprinkled over them to a depth of from an eighth to a quarter of an inch. In the preparation and use of this mixture lies one of the secrets of the skilful cook of beefsteak. Over this black pepper is sprinkled, till the white covering of the steak is hidden. Then it is broiled.

When the steaks are cooked just to the proper turn they are taken quickly from the fire and dropped into a large pan of melted butter. The cook's assistants have them in hand now, while the cook himself goes at once to work at broiling the next batch. The steaks are taken out of the melted butter and cut into slices of something less than the thickness of a finger. Each slice is laid on a little slice of bread. These are disposed on a platter and passed around. Each guest takes a slice of bread, with its slice of steak on it, in his fingers. At the same time celery is passed, and the mugs are filled up with ale. The dinner is started.

This eating of beefsteak with the fingers is not such a terrible thing as it sounds. It must be remembered that each bit of steak lies comfortably on its slice of bread, and the bread is all that has to be touched. The meat, having been properly broiled, raised, killed, dressed, hung, cooked and served, does not have to be rent and torn asunder. It is just as easy to bite through the slices of bread and meat together as if the bread had nothing but butter on it. If your steak comes out any tougher than butter, you may set your beefsteak dinner down as a failure and hope to do better next time.

The cooking goes steadily on. As soon as a batch of steaks is ready it is passed around and the cook begins on another. By-and-by comes about a platter heaped with the bones that have been taken from the steaks before they were sliced. Those who remember that "the nearer the bone the sweeter the meat" take these and gnaw them. Those who are not so full of wise saws let them pass. The cook goes on cooking as long as he thinks that anybody can be induced to eat steaks. After that he broils a few lamb chops, which are served for dessert. The dinner ends with these, unless there is still some ale left which somebody wants to finish up. After the dinner the guests may entertain one another, if they feel like entertaining, or there may be speaking, if anybody is still able to speak. The safest way, if entertainment is desired, is to hire performers for it who do not join in the dinner.

PARISIAN COOKING.

AN ERA OF GASTRONOMIC RENAISSANCE
BEGUN BY THE DUKES OF ROHAN
AND DOUDEAUVILLE.SIMPLICITY INSISTED UPON AT THE JOCKEY
CLUB AND THE CERCLE DE L'UNION—JOSEPH,
FREDERIC, THE CHEF OF PRESIDENT
FAURE AND THE CHEFS OF THE LEAD-
ING RESTAURANTS WELCOME THE
REFORMATION AND PROCLAIM
CLASSICAL PURITY IN THE
ART OF DINING.

Paris, November 15.

The year 1897 will be memorable in the annals of French cookery, for it marks the entry into what may be called its period of renaissance. Just as the revival of the classical purity in painting, sculpture, literature and architecture was effected in the sixteenth century under the influence of the Medici, so is the art of cooking accomplishing at the close of the nineteenth century a similar regeneration under the inspiration and patronage of such master gourmets as the Duc de Rohan, the Duc de Doudeauville, the Marquis de Jaucourt, M. Bischoffshelm and a select coterie of their disciples, whose kitchens to-day are acknowledged to be the standard of the highest modern development of the gastronomic art. The new departure already imparted to French cooking cannot fall before long to make itself felt in New-York, and will eventually penetrate to every corner of Christendom where well-cooked and well-served dinners are appreciated.

The far-reaching importance of this movement may be made clearer by a brief reference to French culinary history. Records preserved in the French National Library, some of which are embodied in the works of Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin, Balzac, Theodore Child and Charles Monselet, conclusively show that of all the cookery ever achieved that which prevailed during the Regency of the Duc d'Orléans came the nearest to absolute perfection. A contemporary of the "petits soupers" of the eighteenth century, Grimm, the author of the famous "Correspondance Littéraire," has expressed his belief that the sumptuousness of the Roman tables of the days of Lucullus was not to be compared with the refinement resulting in that classical simplicity which characterized the cooking of the Regency. The culinary efforts of the first quarter of the eighteenth century



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were directed toward developing the natural predominating flavor of each element and preventing its taste from being vitiated or neutralized by a profusion of discordant condiments and seasonings. It was under the Regency that the science of roasting reached its apogee—"the joint submitted to the heat of an intense but open fire, which coagulated the surface, thereby retaining the juice during a continuance of the roasting process before a more moderate fire."

It was during the Regency that intelligent research, infinite care, labor and costly sacrifice evolved from primary bases sauces never since rivalled in purity and fineness of taste. It was the time when grands seigneurs like the Marquis de Béchamel, the Duc de Soubise, the Duc de Richelieu, Maréchal Villeroi, Prince de Condé and the Duc de Montmorency immortalized themselves by combining those fundamental sauces and dishes whose names remain to-day household words throughout Europe and America. The Regent himself invented the famous "pain de foie gras à l'Orléans," the "mahonnaise," now familiar as the mayonnaise, and also the "sauce à la régence," compounded by the slow reduction and pulverization of tender poultry. The Regency, whatever else may be said of it, certainly constituted the Augustan era of the gastronomic art.

Under Louis XV cookery remained stationary, with a slight tendency toward complexity. With Louis XVI came a change toward profusion and incongruity. During the First Empire there was a slight improvement, which continued with the Restoration and until Louis Philippe. But with the Third Empire exotic tastes set in, which